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The Caucasus Crisis

International Perceptions and
Policy Implications for Germany and Europe

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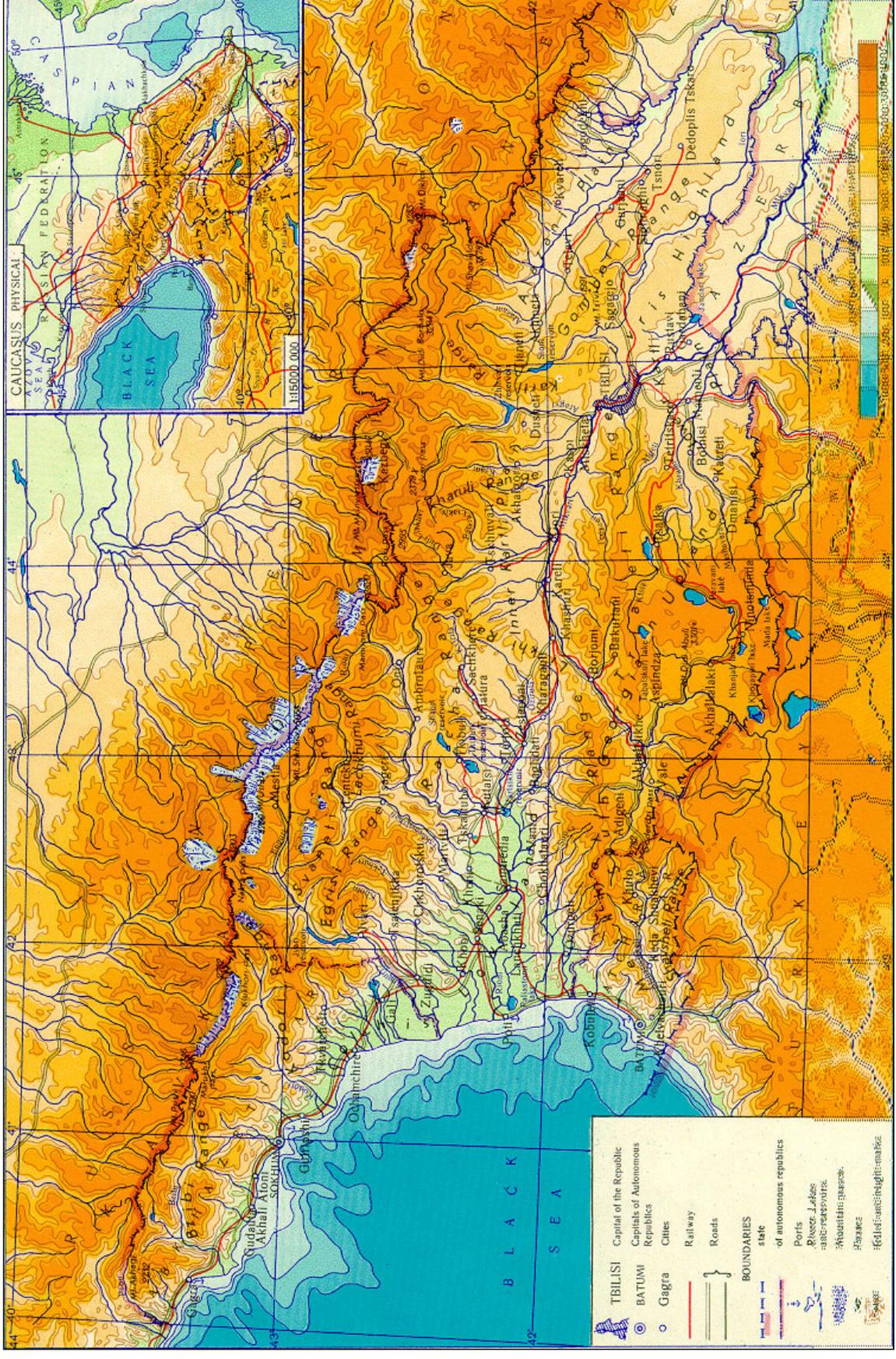
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Table of Contents

- 5 **Problems and Recommendations**
- 7 **“A Short, Victorious War”?**
Russian Perspectives on the Caucasus Crisis
Hans-Henning Schröder
- 12 **Military Implications of the Georgia War:**
Russian Armed Forces in Need of Reform
Margarete Klein
- 19 **The Regional Dimension:**
Georgia and the Southern Caucasus after the War
Uwe Halbach
- 23 **The Caucasus Conflict and the Future of the CIS**
Andrea Schmitz
- 26 **Ukraine and Russia: A New Flashpoint in Crimea**
Rainer Lindner
- 30 **The Old Fears of the New Europeans**
Kai-Olaf Lang
- 34 **“We are all Georgians” – Perceptions of the**
Russian–Georgian War in the United States
Markus Kaim
- 37 **First Priority: Keep the Alliance Together**
Frank Kupferschmidt
- 41 **The EU’s Southern Caucasus Policy under the**
French Council Presidency:
Between Consultation, Cooperation and Confrontation
Annegret Bendiek and Daniela Schwarzer
- Appendix**
- 49 **Timeline of the Russian-Georgian Conflict**
(3 April to 3 September 2008)
- 57 **Abbreviations and Acronyms**
- 58 **The Authors**
- 59 **Other SWP Publications on Russia, Georgia and the Caucasus**

Map
Caucasus region



Source: <http://www.metropoltravel.ge/images/maps/fizikuri.jpg>

**The Caucasus Crisis.
International Perceptions and Policy Implications
for Germany and Europe**

During the second week of August 2008 a local conflict in South Ossetia suddenly flared up into a conflagration on an international scale. Russia's decision to answer the Georgian attack on South Ossetia with a massive military intervention and to "punish" Georgia's wayward leadership triggered an international crisis.

The brief analyses collected here examine how the Caucasus crisis has been perceived in the most important affected states and international organizations and outline the options that ensue. Alongside the question of how the crisis itself was managed, three themes are uppermost: a peaceful European order extending beyond the borders of the European Union, stronger political integration within the EU, and defining the role of NATO in an expanded Europe.

- ▶ The escalation of the local conflict in South Ossetia into a European crisis has shown that the existing structures – NATO, EU, OSCE and CIS – are plainly unable to prevent conflict between hostile countries. Russia's elites, wanting to see their country regain its former role as a great power, ignore the normative framework the OSCE tries to establish, and disregard the CIS. Plainly neither organization is strong enough to structure a region extending from Europe through to central Asia. NATO and the EU, on the other hand, are perceived as a threat by the Russian leadership, which makes them in their present form unsuited for integrating an expanded Europe. So the crisis has thrown up the medium-term task of redesigning the European order – to include Russia.
- ▶ The first thing, however, is crisis management. Russia, the largest European state, must be expected to respect the rules of the UN and the OSCE, and an appropriate form must be found to make this clear to the Russian leadership. The next step is to find a format that allows Russia and Georgia to participate in international crisis management. Russia must be required to cooperate constructively in the medium-term task of finding a solution to the conflict in the southern Caucasus; the role of mediator will fall to the EU. The French Council presidency would be well advised – in coordination with the following Czech and Swedish presidencies in 2009 – to steer a cooperative course with respect to Russia while at the same time demanding the same cooperation from the Russian side. The EU should actively pursue its role as a mediator between the parties in the southern Caucasus conflict. Greater OSCE involvement in the form of a UN mandate would be advisable.
- ▶ However, the EU's actions are hampered by internal conflict. It often runs into obstacles over Russia because the new member states cannot

be expected simply to abandon their scepticism towards their powerful eastern neighbour. But in the long term a policy of confrontation with Russia would be counterproductive for the security of Europe as a whole. So first of all, the EU's *ostpolitik* must be directed inwards. One of the tasks of the French Council presidency is to sensitize the EU to central and eastern Europeans' fears about Russia, while at the same preventing a policy of confrontation on the part of individual states from narrowing the options for the EU as a whole.

- ▶ While the European Union should hone the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to project into eastern Europe with the overall goal of shaping a region of stability, security and prosperity, specific distinctions should be drawn between countries. States that successfully enact domestic political reforms should be given priority treatment and medium-term encouragement through partial membership in special fields of EU policy of the EU.
- ▶ A security component is needed. The EU should assertively take up and develop the idea of negotiating a new European security architecture which Medvedev proposed in his Berlin speech on 5 June. At the heart of such a negotiating process must be additional security guarantees for Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.
- ▶ Such a policy will encounter resistance not only in Russia, but also within the trans-Atlantic alliance. Whether it will be possible to start a new medium-term initiative for partnership under more realistic preconditions than before will depend on Russia's willingness to cooperate. NATO must demonstrate unity in this situation. The question of NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine is especially conflict-laden. The Bush administration is pursuing the aim of anchoring both these states in the Western security organizations and in this way containing Russian influence in the post-Soviet region. But whether such a policy of containing Russia is more promising of success than integration in a broader Europe will depend largely on the Russian leadership. Its openness to international cooperation is the precondition for establishing a functioning European peace and security architecture.

“A Short, Victorious War”?

Russian Perspectives on the Caucasus Crisis

Hans-Henning Schröder

Russia united

The five-day war in the Caucasus swung Russian society firmly behind its government. Convinced of the moral and political righteousness of the cause, Russia rallied round its new president and proved immune to comments and criticism from abroad. In fact, the consolidation of Medvedev’s position is one of the surprising outcomes of the events in South Ossetia. Opinion polls in mid-August – after the war – showed a significant rise in the number of people who believed that power was shared between Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev or completely in Medvedev’s hands. Only one quarter (down from one third) believed that former President Putin still wielded the real power.

Table 1
In whose hands is the real power in the country today?
(percent of respondents)

	<i>December</i> 2007	<i>February</i> 2008	<i>March</i> 2008	<i>April</i> 2008	<i>May</i> 2008	<i>July</i> 2008	<i>August</i> 2008
In Medvedev’s hands	16	20	20	22	17	9	14
In Putin’s hands	29	23	21	27	32	36	26
Equally shared	39	41	47	36	40	47	49
No response	16	16	12	15	11	8	10

Source: Surveys by the Levada Centre from 15 to 18 August 2008, www.levada.ru/press/2008082102.html (accessed 22 August 2008).

This contradicts the Western media’s characterization of Prime Minister Putin as the real “war leader” and Medvedev as his puppet. The Russian public regards its president as a “real man” who sent his army to fight for a just cause and won. His confidence ratings are now almost as high as Putin’s. We cannot know whether the decision to send troops was really his, or whether he was merely carrying out the decision of his powerful backers – and for Russians the question is unimportant. The war has certainly strengthened Medvedev’s position – but in the role of the “strong leader” rather than the level-headed liberal politician abiding by international legal norms. It is easy to imagine how the Moscow spin-doctors see domestic political advantage in Medvedev continuing to play the role of the “strong leader”.

Justifications and motives

The overwhelming majority of the population approved of the military intervention, and any criticism came in the form of demands for a harsher, more aggressive response. The deployment of regular forces in South Ossetia found the support of 78 percent of Russians. Driven by concerted media coverage demonizing the Georgian leadership, a wave of patriotic enthusiasm rolled across Russia in August, leaving no space for critical discussion of the government's policies. The official justification for Russia's incursion into Georgia integrated the media's accusations. In his public statements Medvedev cited the following reasons:

- ▶ The Georgian leadership is responsible for illegal acts of violence committed against citizens of South Ossetia during the past fifteen years.
- ▶ There had to be retaliation for attacks on Russian citizens, "citizens of other countries" and Russian units stationed in South Ossetia as "peace-keeping forces".
- ▶ The Georgian leadership had launched "Operation Clean Field" to settle the South Ossetia issue once and for all. Russia could not stand by and permit such an unparalleled act of aggression to proceed. The Russian president literally described Georgia's actions as "genocide" and maintained that it was Russia's duty to step in.
- ▶ Russia was the only state that acted to defend the "peaceful population" and Russian citizens. Russia claimed to be acting in self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Russian public opinion overwhelmingly joined in the condemnation. A survey by the Public Opinion Foundation found that 76 percent of respondents blamed Georgia and 72 percent characterized Georgia's actions as genocide.

Alongside the official reasons, analysts and the media also discussed other motives for Russia's actions, including the following:

- ▶ Russia wishes to be perceived as a major power with hegemony in its own sphere of influence.
- ▶ American penetration into the Russian sphere of influence (supporting the Rose Revolution and deploying US military advisers to Georgia) is perceived as a geopolitical threat, which has been averted by the use of military force in the South Ossetia conflict.
- ▶ Georgia has been selling itself as a transit route for oil and gas pipelines avoiding Russian territory. The Russian show of force will discourage future investors.
- ▶ The situation in Georgia offered Russia a nice opportunity to pay back the United States and NATO for their actions over Kosovo, where "the West" cold-shouldered Russia, shutting it out of the political process. The situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia now provided an opportunity to retaliate.

Almost all Russian politicians and commentators are convinced that Russia's use of military force has achieved its goals: the genocide has been prevented, South Ossetian and Russian citizens have been protected, and

the world has been shown that Russia is a force to be reckoned with. “Russia Is Back” was *Iswestija*’s triumphant headline over a report about a panel discussion on the South Ossetia war: By helping weak nations Russia has once again become a force to be taken seriously in international politics.

The costs of the conflict: diplomatic, military, economic

During August satisfaction about regaining a powerful role largely masked the negative repercussions of the adventure. But after the first weeks also critical voices were starting to be heard.

- ▶ Newspapers acknowledged that the intervention in South Ossetia and Georgia had been conducted swiftly and energetically, but complained that the Russian forces had fought the war in the outdated style “of our heroic fathers and grandfathers”. There had been no sign of the kind of high-tech weaponry used by the United States in Iraq: satellite reconnaissance, laser-controlled precision munitions, GPS (the Russian equivalent is called GLONASS). The victory had been won through “heroism, blood and 1960s weapons” rather than superior technology. And reconnaissance had been defective. Unable to blind Georgian radar systems, the air force had lost at least four planes. The war in Georgia, it was felt, had clearly exposed problems both in weaponry and operational capacity.
- ▶ Economists in turn pointed out the great financial burdens ensuing from the conflict and its diplomatic repercussions. The costs of the military intervention itself were estimated to be small, nor was the reconstruction aid and support for South Ossetian refugees really a factor. But the collapse on the stock exchanges and currency markets gave real cause for concern. Russian shares suffered considerable losses in the wake of the South Ossetia conflict and there was a tangible outflow of capital. According to the finance minister six billion dollars left the country on 8 August alone. During the days of fighting the dollar rose 69 kopecks to 24.57 roubles, and the Russian Central Bank had to intervene to support the currency. In view of these developments economists warned that investors might withdraw unless the government returned to a course of international cooperation.
- ▶ The unfavourable repercussions of the conflict on Russian foreign policy were noted, but in August initially rather petulantly. President Medvedev told Russia’s NATO ambassador, Dmitry Rogozin, that ultimately NATO depended on cooperation with Russia, while Russia had nothing to fear from an end of collaboration. This statement represented a departure from the policies Medvedev had pursued during his first months in office, when he had pursued cooperation, called for international organizations to be strengthened, proclaimed the observance of international law to be a priority, and launched an initiative to reconfigure Europe’s security architecture. Those policies are now more difficult to implement. Through its incursion into Georgia and unilateral recogni-

tion of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia has isolated itself internationally. That became very clear at the end of August, when the leaders gathered for the annual summit meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization expressed their concern about the conflict in South Ossetia but ignored Russia's request for explicit support. As of early September the only country to join Russia in recognizing the two new states was Nicaragua.

No way forward

It is not clear how long the Russian leadership will be able to maintain this policy of strength at the price of international isolation. In August certainly it regarded its intervention against Georgia as a success:

- ▶ The short, victorious war has stabilized the situation within Russia. Society is united behind the government.
- ▶ Georgia has been destabilized and the American position weakened.
- ▶ Russia has demonstrated that it has the capacity to enforce its aims within the CIS region by use of force and that neither NATO nor the EU possess the means to interfere.

By recognizing the sovereignty of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia has signaled its refusal to internationalize the process of conflict resolution, instead continuing to insist on unilateral solutions. At his meeting with the presidents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia – Sergei Bagapsh and Eduard Kokoity – on 14 August, President Medvedev spoke of the need for a non-aggression treaty guaranteed by Russia, the EU and the OSCE. But Russia's unilateral recognition of the two republics and the continuing presence of its forces in Georgia's heartland appears to have closed this route for the foreseeable. Putin's statement that there was no special need for Russia to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Medvedev's comments on NATO signalize that the Russian leadership is willing to settle for isolation.

Still, the Russian side has so far avoided steps that would violate substantial interests of EU member states. For example, the German military is still permitted to fly over Russian territory to supply its contingent in Afghanistan and to use the base in Kyrgyzstan, and a large proportion of the supplies for NATO forces stationed in Afghanistan continue to arrive via Russia. So Russia is keeping open the option of reopening dialogue. However, parts of the Russian elite are more than ever obsessed with the idea that Russia is a major power equal to the EU and the United States.

At the end of August signs of a shift were observed. The Russian leadership seemed to realize that the military intervention in Georgia's heartland and its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had met with incomprehension internationally. In the last week of August the Kremlin conducted a very obvious damage-limitation exercise, with the prime minister and president attempting to explain Russia's actions in a series of interviews with the BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, and German and French television. Whether the decision-makers in Moscow have really come to their

senses will become apparent in the upcoming talks on resolving the South Ossetia conflict, which will have to be conducted in the framework of the United Nations and OSCE.

Military Implications of the Georgia War: Russian Armed Forces in Need of Reform

Margarete Klein

When the fighting in Georgia ended, Russia's leadership and media began an intense discussion of the foreign policy and financial consequences – and of the military implications of the “five-day war” for South Ossetia. Quick victory over the Georgian army initially triggered a wave of super-power euphoria, but soon high-ranking officers and experts were speaking up to complain about grave deficits in the army's equipment and strategy, stripping the gloss off the notion of military might. The president and prime minister responded by announcing a drastic 27 percent increase in the defence budget for the coming year, but money alone will not be enough to create an efficient modern army equipped to meet the security challenges of the twenty-first century. It will be much more important to break down the obstacles that have hindered reform and transformation of the Russian armed forces for sixteen years.

At first glance the “five-day war” would appear to have been an overwhelming Russian military success. In just three days the Russian armed forces achieved their immediate goals of repelling the Georgian attack on South Ossetia and protecting to the South Ossetians, who had been made “Russian citizens” in large numbers through the distribution of Russian passports. Much of the Georgian army's facilities and weaponry was destroyed, setting back by years the ambitious military modernization programme of a country which would like to join NATO. Furthermore, winning the war allowed Moscow to reinforce its military presence in the region. The treaties on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance concluded with South Ossetia and Abkhazia on 17 September 2008, following recognition of their independence, provide for the establishment of Russian bases. According to its defence minister, Russia plans to station 3,800 regular troops in each republic, which would more than compensate for the withdrawal of all Russian forces from bases in Georgia at Akhalkalaki and Batumi (agreed with Tbilisi in 2005 and completed by the end of 2007) and in general strengthen Moscow's capacity to act as the enforcer in the region.

The speed of victory also clearly distinguishes the “five-day war” from the two Chechen wars. Just as the latter became a byword for the decline of Russian military power, the successful campaign in Georgia was interpreted initially as a sign of the return of Russian military prowess. Speaking to Russian officers in Vladikavkas on 18 September 2008, President Dmitri Medvedev said that the “well-conducted, effective, peace-making operation” proved that the Russian armed forces had “overcome the crisis of the 1990s”. But is that the case?

Small improvements

Compared to the two Chechen wars certain improvements can indeed be observed in the military operation in Georgia, but they should not be overestimated. The Russians quickly managed to move ten thousand troops and heavy equipment into the topographically difficult area of operations in South Ossetia. And on 11 August 2008 they successfully opened up a second front in Abkhazia with about 9,000 soldiers, preventing the Georgians from concentrating their forces. This all suggests good operational planning and preparation, which is not surprising given that the conflict had been building since April 2008. Moscow began strengthening its peacekeeping contingent in Abkhazia in April 2008 and in May sent four hundred railway troops to improve transport infrastructure there, as well as deploying five hundred paratroopers to South Ossetia. In the second half of July – parallel to the Georgian-American “Immediate Response” exercise – the Russian army conducted its “Caucasus 2008” manoeuvre. Many of the eight thousand soldiers involved later took part in the “five-day war”. According to media reports the command posts remained operational after the end of the manoeuvre and the 58th Army remained in a state of alert.

The second improvement, especially in comparison to the second Chechen war, was that fewer inexperienced and poorly trained conscripts were deployed this time. According to media reports, 70 percent of the troops sent to South Ossetia were enlisted “kontraktniki”, while the forces deployed to Abkhazia were exclusively enlisted and career soldiers. This reflects a certain degree of progress in efforts to professionalize the Russian army, which has been a core goal of military reform since the 1990s. Ever more units, for example the 76th Guards Airborne Division from Pskov that was deployed in Georgia, are completely made up of “kontraktniki”. At the same time, however, the fact that conscripts were used at all in a conflict that had been on the cards for months reflects the difficulties that have been encountered in restructuring the armed forces. Low pay (a lance corporal for example earns just \$345 per month), social vulnerability and lack of status make enlisting in the army fairly unattractive. There have also been reports of officers exerting massive pressure on conscripts to enlist. Only about 15 percent of “kontraktniki” renew their contracts, leading the army to lose its most experienced soldiers. So the operation in Georgia cannot disguise the continued existence of fundamental problems with professionalizing the army.

Outdated equipment, backward technology

The problems of Russian armed forces, however, are greater than the need for professionalization. The war in Georgia ruthlessly exposed the weaknesses of another pillar of the military reforms: equipping the army with adequate high-technology weapons and weapons systems. It is estimated that 80 percent of Russia’s weaponry is worn out and outdated and has not

been refurbished since Soviet times. Especially in electronic warfare, Russia lags behind the West.

A comparison of Georgian and Russian tanks illustrates the magnitude of the equipment deficits of the ground forces. Although both sides mostly deployed T-72s built in the Soviet era, modernized equipment gave the Georgian tanks a clear edge. With GPS, thermal imaging, night sights, and modern IFF and communication systems they were also equipped for poor weather and night-time operations, whereas the Russian tanks were practically “blind”.

The state of the air force is especially dramatic. The Su-25 attack jets largely deployed over Georgia have been in service for thirty years and have hardly been updated during that time. They lack radar and modern computerized targeting, so instead of precision-guided munitions they had to fall back on older types of bombs and rockets. As a consequence it took the Russian air force too long to knock out Georgian artillery and air defences, which succeeded in causing heavy Russian losses on the ground and in the air. For example, Russian ground forces crossing from North to South Ossetia came under massive artillery fire as they left the Roki tunnel to advance towards Tskhinvali. Poor training could be the reason the Russians even managed to lose three Su-25 aircraft to Georgian fire. Whereas their NATO colleagues average 120–150 flight training hours annually, Russian pilots only get about 40 hours.

Inadequate reconnaissance caused by a lack of drones and satellites was also to blame for the poor performance of the Russian air force. Although Russian companies manufacture and market unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, purchases by the Russian military were stopped in 2006. GLONASS, the Russian equivalent of GPS, has only thirteen of the twenty-four satellites needed to supply the required data at all times. This lack of reconnaissance options led Russian generals to use Tu-22 strategic bombers to fill the gap. Unfit for the task, one of these aircraft was shot down by Georgian air defences.

The technological backwardness of the Russian armed forces also manifested itself in a lack of modern communication and navigation systems. According to media reports there was no regular radio contact between the different units and officers sometimes had to use their mobile phones to contact their own unit’s headquarters and command posts. In combination with mistakes in the chain of command, about which even high-ranking officers have complained, this led to coordination problems.

Altogether the “five-day war” exposed the immense modernization needs of Russia’s conventional armed forces, which have actually been known for a long time. Russia’s victory was built not on material and technological superiority but good preparation and superiority of numbers. According to media reports, about 6,600 Georgian soldiers faced 10,000 Russians in South Ossetia, while Moscow’s 9,000 men in Abkhazia outnumbered their Georgian adversaries by more than four to one. And those figures do not even include the as yet unknown number of South Ossetian and Abkhaz fighters. Overall the Russian army is forty times the size of the

Georgian, and its military budget thirty times larger. Reliable figures for deployed equipment are not available, but Russia's quantitative superiority is in little doubt (despite a certain modernization advantage for Georgia). According to *Moscow Defense Brief* Georgia had only one wing of fighter aircraft and a total of 247 battle tanks. Russia's technologically backward conventional armed forces look more like an army of the twentieth century than of the twenty-first. For certain types of operation (such as night-time) or particular forms of warfare (such as cyberwarfare) Moscow's forces are thoroughly unprepared. Russia may have demonstrated its ability to defeat a small post-Soviet country receiving no outside assistance, but that does not automatically say anything about the outcome of a conventional war with a stronger opponent.

Prospects of the modernization programme

In response to criticism by military officers and experts, the Russian government announced an increase in defence spending: next year the budget will increase by 27 percent to \$50 billion. Here, President Medvedev declared on 11 September 2008, the lessons of the "five-day war" will also be taken into account, with attention focussing on procuring modern weapons and equipment (for example GLONASS, precision-guided munitions and reconnaissance drones) and on improving training. Overall, Medvedev said, creating "modern, efficient armed forces", would be one of the "highest priorities" in coming years.

The announced increase in the defence budget fits seamlessly into the upward trend of the past eight years. By 2009 military spending will have increased tenfold since 2000. In December 2006 then President Vladimir Putin had already announced an ambitious military modernization programme with a volume of approx. \$189 billion for 2007 to 2015, in the scope of which 45 percent of the military arsenal was to be modernized or replaced. This shows that military power occupies a position of increased importance as a pillar of the country's superpower ambitions. But there is considerable doubt whether merely increasing funding within this framework will be enough to meet the goal of "modern, effective armed forces".

Firstly, the already immense modernization needs of the armed forces will become still more acute in coming years as conventional and nuclear weapons and weapons systems grow increasingly old. New developments are certainly observed – for example the new Borei class of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed submarines (the first of which, Yuri Dolgoruky, was launched in 2007), new strategic missiles like Topol-M and Bulava, or the advanced S-400 air defence system – but their impact is marginal. At the moment Russia produces no more than seven Topol-M missiles per year, which is not enough to replace the land-based long-range missiles taken out of service. The sea-launched long-range Bulava missile completed its first successful launch only in September 2008, following a series of failed tests.

Secondly, the modernization programme suffers from above-average inflation for military goods. While the general rate of inflation in 2007 was 11.9 percent, it topped 30 percent for certain defence products. Even in Russia, rising energy and transport costs have an impact.

Thirdly, in the past a considerable proportion of additional funding has been siphoned off into corrupt channels that pervade the military and the military-industrial complex. Orders have often been awarded on criteria other than efficiency, to the detriment of the quality and quantity of weapons and weapons systems manufactured.

The chronic underfunding of the armed forces results, fourthly, from their size. Russia is trying to maintain and modernize an army of 1.12 million men – only 20 percent smaller than the US armed forces – on a budget that in 2007 was just one fifteenth of the US defence budget. Consequently about 70 percent of the Russian defence budget is spent on upkeep and only 30 percent on procurement, modernization, and research and development. Even during major operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, procurement and R&D together still represented 54 percent of the US defence budget.

High-ranking Russian generals have long been calling for defence spending to be increased from between 2.3 and 2.6 percent to at least 3.5 percent of GDP. But because this would endanger the socioeconomic modernization programme, President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin have already repeatedly declared that drastically expanding the defence budget in that way is not the route they intend to take. As then President Putin told the Federal Assembly in May 2006, they want to avoid repeating the mistakes of the Soviet Union. Alternatively Russia could return with renewed vigour to the military reforms that have been dragging on for sixteen years.

As well as modernizing weapons and equipment, the reforms encompass several, in some cases closely interlocking components. The first of these is to strengthen civilian control over the military, where some progress has been made in recent years. An amendment in 2004 gave the defence minister more power over the general staff, and since the Georgia war cutting down its bloated size has been under discussion. Anatoly Serdyukov, appointed in February 2007, is the first Russian defence minister who comes neither from the military nor the intelligence services. But at the same time, to all intents and purposes the State Duma fell away as a control instrument as a direct consequence of the circumscription of political pluralism which cost the parliament its position as an independent political institution (which was already fragile even under Boris Yeltsin). Ever more parts of the defence budget are being declared “classified” chapters, about which no information is provided. But in order to ensure that the funds are used efficiently, a strong parliament ensuring transparency and controlling of military spending would be indispensable.

The second pillar of military reform involves reducing the size of the army while simultaneously professionalizing it. Former President Putin tried to do this but was thwarted by the resistance of the generals. Only if

the number of troops is reduced will it be possible to invert the relationship between upkeep on the one side and equipment modernization and research and development on the other, as the government plans to accomplish by 2017. It is possible that Russia's demographic crisis will stimulate the process of reducing the size of the army and professionalizing. Halving military service to twelve months at the beginning of 2008 doubled the number of recruits needed annually to 600,000. Even though many grounds for deferment have been abolished, this quota is already impossible to reach. Improving the social position of members of the military is closely associated with professionalization. Without better pay, adequate housing and decisive action against hazing (*dedovshchina*) the army will continue to attract primarily those who have next to no chance on the civilian labour market. According to the defence ministry, seven soldiers died last year as a result of attacks by comrades or superiors, and 147 committed suicide. But the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, an independent NGO, puts the figures much higher, estimating that three thousand soldiers die annually of non-combat-related causes.

The third and decisive aspect of the military reforms lies in clarifying two fundamental questions. What security threats is Russia exposed to and what position does it wish to occupy in the international system? Only after clear answers have been found to these questions can funds be applied effectively in pursuit of clear priorities. As far as the assessed threat is concerned, opinions diverge in the Russian leadership. High-ranking generals continue to see NATO and the United States as the main threat to national security. Yuri Baluyevsky, then armed forces chief of staff, declared in January 2007 at a conference of the military academy that cooperation with the West had not lessened the military threat to Russia. The military leadership attaches less importance to regional and local conflicts and transnational security risks. Although political leaders also take every opportunity to criticize the "unilateralism" of the United States and the eastern expansion of NATO, the foreign policy concept that the new President Medvedev approved in July 2008 states that the threat of a "major war" (code for war with NATO) has diminished. This document also gives greater attention to transnational security risks.

Really, these plans should lead to a stronger focus on modernizing the conventional arsenal and creating a smaller-sized, but in return better equipped and more mobile military. In fact, alongside a number of conventional weapons systems such as reconnaissance drones and precision-guided munitions, the new modernization programme continues to stress strengthening Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal and expanding its capacity to project power globally. Thus on 26 September 2008, President Medvedev told a military audience that Russia would improve its "strategic deterrence" by 2020. Four days later he added that Russia had to regain its position as a "great naval power". This concentration on "strategic parity" and the navy results from the ambition to position Russia internationally as a global rather than regional power – a goal on which political and military leaders agree. So funding will continue to prioritize building strategic

missiles and nuclear warheads and equipping the navy with new nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers. But even with the planned new procurements Russia will still be a long way from parity with the United States, nor is it likely to be able to deploy these particular weapons systems in regional and local conflicts on its fragile southern border. Here Russia will have to continue to depend on the weakness of its potential adversaries.

Summary

Although victorious in outcome, the “five-day war” highlighted the continuing discrepancy between Russia’s superpower ambitions and its real capabilities. There is military muscle behind Moscow’s striving for regional dominance in the post-Soviet region – and the military operation in Georgia is certainly meant as a warning to other CIS states (first and foremost Ukraine) not to get too close to NATO and the United States – but the war against “little Georgia” should not be interpreted as a sign that Russia is back as a global superpower. Instead, the “five-day war” clearly showed how far Russia’s conventional armed forces lag behind the technological developments of the past twenty years. The only thing that still guarantees it a special position in the international system is its still considerable nuclear arsenal, with an estimated 3,313 strategic and 2,076 tactical nuclear warheads.

Vladimir Putin assumed his presidency as a war leader in Chechnya and concluded from the failures there that the army, which had been neglected in the 1990s, required comprehensive reform. He may have succeeded in slowing the spiral of decline the armed forces suffered under Boris Yeltsin, and achieved modernization successes in individual areas thanks to rising oil and gas revenues, but beyond that he restricted himself to symbolic acts designed to create an appearance of military muscle to match an increasingly confident foreign policy stance. Thus in August 2007 Moscow resumed patrols by long-range bombers over the Atlantic and Pacific (which had been suspended in 1992). A series of high-profile exercises were conducted, and President Putin’s proposal to resume military parades on Red Square was put into practice by his successor. But Putin failed to implement comprehensive reform of the army. That was due to the tenacity of traditional threat perceptions in the political and above all military elites and the unbroken veto power of the general staff on internal military matters, but also to the leadership style of Putin, who understood himself more as a broker than a reformer. His successor Dmitri Medvedev now faces a similar challenge. The coming months will show whether he regards the “five-day war” against Georgia as a “wake-up call” for thorough military reform, as many military experts demand, or merely stays true to Putin’s motto of “more money and more symbolism”.

The Regional Dimension: Georgia and the Southern Caucasus after the War

Uwe Halbach

Of the six Caucasus wars since 1990, the five-day conflict in Georgia in August 2008 exploded onto the stage of world politics like no other. But what do these latest developments mean for the region, for Georgia and the southern Caucasus? For Georgia it is first and foremost a question of territorial integrity. Since the country's independence in 1991 state power has never extended to cover all its internationally recognized territory. As well as the separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, other parts of the country have also managed to escape Tbilisi's control for a time (Adzharia, Pankisi Gorge and others). The already deep divide with Abkhazia and South Ossetia now looks unbridgeable. So for all the recent talk of Georgian territorial integrity, it is a hollow phrase for the moment. After strengthening its ties with the two separatist entities in April 2008 (in response to the recognition of Kosovan independence and the discussion of NATO membership for Georgia), Russia has now followed up with diplomatic recognition. On 26 August President Medvedev – ignoring vehement international criticism and in defiance of UN resolutions – granted the request of both chambers of Russia's parliament. The territorial violations during the conflict and in its aftermath also affected Georgia's heartland. The Russian army's operation to "enforce peace" in response to the Georgian offensive against the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali on 8 August turned into an operation to punish, occupy and weaken a neighbour whose behaviour had long been a thorn in Russia's side. Russia temporarily occupied parts of the country and laid claim to military control of buffer zones surrounding South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Georgia is so small that such "security zones" encompass whole regions. The zone in the west, bordering Abkhazia, for example, contains about half the population of the province of Mingrelia (Samegrelo), the air base at Senaki and the approaches to the port of Poti. Not until the second round of negotiations with French President Nicolas Sarkozy did the Russian side give more precise details (and dates) for the withdrawal of its troops from Georgia's heartland and for leaving the buffer zones, where two hundred EU and OSCE observers are now to be deployed.

Russian military operations targeted facilities that symbolized Georgian ambitions. Thus the temporarily occupied port of Poti represents Georgia's transit routes across the southern Caucasus. Huge foreign investment, it had been hoped, would turn Poti into the "Dubai of the Caucasus". The war divided Georgia in two parts (recalling the eastern and western kingdoms of the era before the country joined the tsarist empire). Initial estimates put the direct damage to civilian infrastructure at about four

hundred million dollars, in a country where 40 percent of the population was already living below the poverty line.¹ Now, alongside large numbers from the separatist wars of the early 1990s (including more than 200,000 Georgians from Abkhazia), new refugees have to be provided for (according to UNHCR 130,000). The United States has promised Georgia aid amounting to one billion dollars to rebuild infrastructure.

Under the presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia boosted military spending from 0.5 percent of GNP in 2004 to more than 7 percent. This was par for the course in the southern Caucasus, which has one of the world's highest rates of growth in arms spending. Back in 2006 Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU Commissioner for External Relations, was already condemning the enormous military spending in this region where, grave socio-economic challenges were considerably more urgent.² The Russian operation made a point of targeting the prestigious infrastructure projects designed to bring the Georgian armed forces up to NATO standards, such as the base at Senaki. Despite a decade of spoon-feeding with generous modernization aid from the United States and Turkey, the Georgian army returned from its clash with Russian troops with its tail between its legs. The Russian side boasts that its tanks and infantry clashed in South Ossetia with a modernized, well-equipped Georgian army, and took it out of action within days. It is celebrating the "first successful Russian blitzkrieg".

President Saakashvili initially succeeded in transforming a humiliating military defeat into domestic political victory. As long as Russia kept parts of Georgia's heartland occupied and demonized "the Saakashvili regime" it forced Georgian society to close ranks with its president, who would under other circumstances have faced critical questions about his aggressive policies towards the separatist regions. Increased support from Western partners also protected a Georgian government that had come under considerable domestic political pressure since autumn 2007. The Georgian opposition kept quiet during the fighting and immediately afterwards, but by September 9 the first calls for Saakashvili's resignation were being heard.

Although defeated militarily, Tbilisi did make some progress with respect to its long-held wish for greater international diplomatic involvement in dealing with the conflicts in the southern Caucasus. Even without any sign of a date for Georgia to join NATO being named any time soon, Georgia's relationship with the Western military alliance has deepened. At the special meeting of NATO foreign ministers on 19 August a Nato-Georgia Commission was set up to supervise assistance for rebuilding Georgia's security structures, and in mid-September the NATO Council plans to meet in Tbilisi. On 1 September a special EU summit on the Caucasus clarified how the twenty-seven member states should approach the Georgia crisis. Although they were unable to agree on sanctions against Russia, they did at least coordinate a coherent diplomatic ap-

¹ *Russia vs Georgia: The Fallout*, International Crisis Group Europe Report 195, 28 August 2008, 14.

² www.caucas.com, 30 August 2006.

proach towards Moscow and a shared vocabulary. Georgia has long been asking the EU to become more strongly involved in the region and work together more closely with international organizations such as the OSCE. Tbilisi rejected the previous formats for peacekeeping and negotiation in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, which were slanted towards Russia, saying that Russia demonstrated no neutrality at all and was itself a party to the conflict. Russia, Georgia said, was interested in “piece keeping, not peacekeeping” in the Caucasus. Even before the South Ossetia war, in particular since April 2008, the EU had been intensifying its diplomatic involvement in the Caucasus conflicts, but following a policy of “working around conflict” rather than “working on conflict”. It was about confidence-building, economic reconstruction in conflict zones, mediation – but not alternatives to Russian peacekeeping.

Of course following the recent developments it is unclear whether the previously existing international negotiating mechanisms and observer missions can be upheld at all. Now that Russia has granted diplomatic recognition to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, what will become of bodies and missions such as the UN Secretary-General’s Group of Friends of Georgia (Russia, United States, Britain, Germany, France) or UNOMIG (United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia)?

Dealing with conflict in the southern Caucasus must also include the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, where Russia is one of the main mediators alongside the United States and France. In early March trouble flared up again with the worst armed incident for many years on the ceasefire line between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, which is not monitored by any peacekeeping force. Although to date neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan have made clear political statements on the Georgia crisis, both are embroiled in it, for instance through disruption of Georgian transit routes. Businesspeople from Armenia and Turkey discovered the war had cut off all functioning trade routes into the Caucasus, and argued for the border between the two countries (which had been closed since 1993) to be reopened.

On the sidelines of the Georgia crisis, the hostile states of Turkey and Armenia are trying to unfreeze relations. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan travelled to Moscow, Tbilisi and Baku with a proposal for a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform, on the basis of which German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier put forward a “comprehensive stability plan for the whole Caucasus region”. However, such initiatives recall earlier stability plans for the Caucasus, none of which came to fruition.

Azerbaijan, which is the energy producer of the southern Caucasus, fears that investors will reassess the risks for pipeline routes. But Azerbaijan is also paying close attention to Russian and international policies towards separatist entities because it – alongside Georgia and Moldova – is one of the states in the CIS region most harmed by separatism. Like Georgia it is increasingly signaling its impatience at the way international efforts to resolve its own regional conflict have become bogged down,

and has expanded its military spending (to two billion dollars in 2008). Any new armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is unlikely to be over after just five days. The arc of crisis of unresolved separatist conflicts in the post-Soviet region (until recently referred to as “frozen”) extends far beyond the current flashpoint of Georgia.

The Caucasus Conflict and the Future of the CIS

Andrea Schmitz

The members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) responded as one would have expected to Russia's aggression in Georgia: slowly and very cautiously. Only Ukraine, which fears being drawn into a similar conflict, quickly took an unequivocal stand with President Viktor Yushchenko sharply criticizing Russia and threatening to prevent Russian warships involved in the fighting in Georgia from returning to the port of Sevastopol. Yushchenko also reiterated his call for NATO membership and comprehensive integration into the Western security system – including integrating Ukraine into the American missile defence system in eastern Europe.

The other CIS states – to the extent that they said anything at all – were a great deal more restrained. The president of Kyrgyzstan and current chair of the CIS, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, issued a joint declaration with his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev regretting the Russian actions and stating that ethno-political conflicts in individual CIS member states had to be resolved on the basis of international law and diplomacy rather than by the use of military force. Events had shown, they said, that the CIS did not have effective mechanisms to prevent conflict, still less to resolve it. Both heads of state appealed to Russia to work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict and stressed that they rejected the use of force as a political tool. The central Asian members of the CIS, which together with Russia and China also belong to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), underlined this position again in a joint declaration by the SCO's annual summit meeting in August 2008, which Russia had no choice but to go along with. Although there was no open criticism of Russia here, Russia's SCO partners refused to support its actions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and underlined instead the primacy of territorial integrity of states and "preventive diplomacy" as the way to solve problems.¹

No other member heeded Georgia's call to follow its example and leave the organization. Only Ukraine has been considering such a step, but as an associate member leaving would be merely a symbolic gesture with little in the way of practical consequences because bilateral relations with individual CIS states have priority anyway (that applies to the other member states too). The weakness of its multilateral mechanisms is why the CIS is relatively ineffective, despite being the largest regional organization in the post-Soviet region.

¹ The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, *Dushanbe Declaration of Heads of SCO Member States*, 28 August 2008, www.sectsco.org/news_detail.asp?id=2360&LanguageID=2.

The CIS, which was founded in December 1991 under the leadership of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine and has seven other former Soviet states as full members,² was originally supposed to provide a common regional economic and security framework to fill the void left by the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the individual member states of the CIS differ widely in terms of resources and conflict potential, and followed diverging economic and foreign policy trajectories during the course of the 1990s. So the function of the CIS increasingly became administering the emerging heterogeneity of the post-Soviet region. And precisely that is likely to be more difficult than before in the aftermath of the Russia-Georgia conflict.

That will remain the case even if confrontation between Russia and the West is going to increase, because the Russian show of power in the Caucasus has placed the CIS states in a tricky situation. They are all closely linked with Russia in economic and security matters. Above all in the field of infrastructure for exporting oil and gas there are strong – and strongly asymmetrical – interdependencies. Internally the CIS states, which all have authoritarian governments and sometimes considerable potential for conflict, tend to be unstable. The political leaderships of these states are very concerned to maintain the domestic status quo, and here Russian support plays a decisive role. So for the majority of CIS states Russia – with which they are also connected through a series of parallel organizations and structures – is the most important external partner.

These structures also include the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), whose Council of Defence Ministers met in the Armenian capital of Yerevan immediately after the fighting between Russia and Georgia ended.³ Agreement was reached on intensifying military cooperation within the framework of the organization, but willingness to cooperate with NATO was expressed too. However, the organization's summit meeting on 5 September 2008 in Moscow underlined again that Russia countenances such cooperation only under the premise of a clear separation of zones of influence. As well as backing Russia's version of events in Georgia, the CSTO heads of state also supported Moscow's demand that the Western alliance cease any further expansion into the post-Soviet region and withhold from offering Georgia and Ukraine the prospect of NATO membership.⁴

However, cooperation with NATO – which takes place overwhelmingly in the scope of the Partnership for Peace – represents a not insignificant vector in the foreign and security policy not only of Georgia and Ukraine but also of the other CIS states. The extent of cooperation varies from country to country, sometimes considerably, but relations with the Western

² Namely, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; Georgia, which did not join the CIS until 1993, declared its departure on 14 August 2008; in 2005 Turkmenistan became just an associate member, like Ukraine.

³ Members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.

⁴ *Deklaratsiya moskovskoi sessii Soveta kollektivnoi bezopasnosti ODKB* [Declaration of the Moscow Meeting of the Council for Collective Security of the Collective Security Treaty Organization] on the organization's website, www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index.htm.

alliance and the EU's growing interest in particular (as manifested for example in the EU's Central Asia Strategy and the strategy paper on Black Sea Synergy)⁵ are of considerable importance for most of the states in the post-Soviet region. This is above all because cooperation with the United States and the EU opens up the possibility of balancing out the influence of Russia (and to an increasing extent also China). Most of the member states of the CIS are concerned to keep all their foreign policy options open. And that means a flexible alliance policy that avoids taking one-sided positions.

A further escalation of tension in the Caucasus and an ensuing polarization of the CIS would greatly restrict those options and put the crisis management of the organization and its member states to a severe test. In the past member states have often criticized the organization's lack of effectiveness. Above all Kazakhstan, whose diplomatic ambitions are increasingly directed towards establishing itself as the initiator of regional integration processes, has put forward a series of reform proposals to counteract the CIS's growing loss of significance. But Russia always responded extremely coolly to the Kazakh proposals. The reason for this is obvious: Moscow is not willing to give up its dominant position in the post-Soviet region.

In this context the Russian demonstration of power in the Caucasus not only calls the effectiveness of the CIS and its member states further into question, but also narrows the options for Kazakhstan when it takes over the OSCE chairmanship in 2010. The choice of Kazakhstan was from the outset associated with the expectation that it would strengthen the legitimacy of the OSCE in the post-Soviet region and thus contribute to a renewal of this security organization. The looming polarization within the CIS makes it even more unlikely that such expectations can be fulfilled.

⁵ Council of the European Union, *The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership*, 31 May 2007, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st10/st10113.en07.pdf>, and Commission of the European Communities, *Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, 11 April 2007, COM (2007) 160, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf.

Ukraine and Russia: A New Flashpoint in Crimea

Rainer Lindner

Since the Orange Revolution relations between Russia and Ukraine have degenerated into permanent conflict. Ukraine's open desire to join the EU and NATO has led the Russian leadership to change tack, especially on energy policy, with gas price increases provoking several political crises. Relations with Moscow reached a low point in January 2008, when the Ukrainian president initiated a letter to the NATO Secretary-General asking for inclusion in the Membership Action Plan as a step on the road to NATO membership negotiations.¹ Citing the large Russian population in the Crimea and the needs of the Russian Black Sea fleet, politicians in Moscow claimed the right to a say in Ukrainian affairs. Since the beginning of 2008 Crimea has become a real geopolitical bone of contention between Moscow and Kiev, while the latest Black Sea crisis has given the Crimea conflict international significance.

A new "frozen conflict"

The Crimea conflict, like the one over Transnistria, is a proxy conflict. Open strife between Ukraine and Russia over the peninsula's future broke out when Ukraine began openly pursuing the perspective of NATO membership and insisting that Russia abide by the agreed date of 2017 for withdrawing its Black Sea fleet from the naval base at Sevastopol. Six historical and contemporary causal factors can be identified:

1. Russia and Ukraine's diverging security interests in the Black Sea region;
2. Historically based claims on the peninsula by nationalist Russian political currents;
3. Conflicting economic interests of Russian (generally Moscow-based) investors and Ukrainian oligarchs;
4. The collision of interests between NATO and Russia engendered by the discussion of NATO expansion;
5. The unresolved question of the basing of the Russian Black Sea fleet,
6. The question of the status of the city of Sevastopol.

When the first warships from the Black Sea fleet set sail from Sevastopol for Georgia immediately after the conflict broke out, Ukraine felt it had been "drawn into" the conflict. Initially Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko wanted to prevent the guided missile cruiser Moskva from returning to Sevastopol. He relented, however, instead decreeing on

¹ Rainer Lindner, *Scharfer Richtungsstreit zwischen Kiew und Moskau: Konfliktfelder Energiepolitik und äußere Sicherheit*, SWP-Aktuell 26/2008 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, April 2008).

13 August 2008 that Ukraine reserved the right to impose stronger controls on ship and aircraft movements by the Russian Black Sea fleet. His decree requires that the Ukrainian security forces be informed at least 72 hours in advance about any planned ship and aircraft movements of the Black Sea fleet. Citing the existing treaties, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev rejected outright the idea of any such intervention in the Russian navy's operational planning. So the Georgia conflict has brought a new dimension to the long-smouldering conflict over the Black Sea fleet.

The Black Sea fleet and Russian interests

Russia refuses to discuss bringing forward the 2017 date for withdrawing its Black Sea fleet. Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian President's special envoy and ambassador in Ukraine, left that in no doubt in June 2008, stating that the Black Sea fleet guards "Russia's southern borders". The State Duma went one step further in a memorandum on Russian-Ukrainian relations to the president and government. In view of Kiev's "unfriendly policies" toward Russia, the Russian parliament announced that it would regard any further pro-NATO moves by Ukraine as a unilateral abrogation of the two countries' friendship treaty. In Ukraine this Russian position was explicitly welcomed by the Party of the Regions and the Communists. So if Ukraine were to move rapidly toward NATO membership Crimea could become a flashpoint of direct conflict between the two neighbours. If Russia no longer felt treaty-bound to observe the withdrawal date of 2017, an escalation of the crisis in political relations would seem inevitable. The Russians living in Crimea regard the Black Sea fleet as an important stabilizing factor, and in May 2008 they collected more than one million signatures on a petition calling for the fleet to remain indefinitely after 2017.² As long as the fleet is there they feel their rights are safe.

Ethnic Russians are not the only group whose fears have been compounded by the conflict in Georgia. After the fighting was over 44.1 percent of the Ukrainian population said they saw the fleet's continuing presence as "a guarantee of peace". Plainly the efforts of the presidential administration in Kiev to have the fleet withdrawn quickly are just as out of step with the wishes of the popular majority as its efforts to join NATO. At the end of August 2008 just 18 percent of Ukrainians firmly supported such a membership perspective.³

As in the cases of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria, Russia likes to cite the Russians living in Crimea to justify its claim to a say in Ukrainian affairs. Recently prominent figures have even questioned whether Ukraine should be a state at all. Vladimir Putin's statement in Bucharest at the NATO summit in April 2008 that Ukraine was not a "proper state" caused consternation in Kiev and stoked Ukrainian fears that Crimea

² Ethnic Russians make up 58.5 percent of Crimea's population, followed by Ukrainians (24.4 percent) and Tatars (12.1 percent).

³ Opinion poll by the weekly *Dzerkalo tyzhnja* in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30/31 August 2008, 4.

might break away. According to a survey published in March 2008, one third of Ukrainians believe that Crimea is in the same situation as Kosovo and consequently regard secession as a realistic possibility.⁴ Alongside symbolic and historical factors, conflicting economic interests play a big role here. Ukraine would like to increase the lease payments for the Sevastopol naval base for the period until 2017, while Russia rejects this; secondly Ukraine increasingly regards the expanding acquisition of property in Crimea by Russian citizens as a consolidation of long-term interests.

What next?

Russia and Ukraine are experiencing a rhythm of crisis that alternately puts energy and security issues on the agenda. The complex Crimea conflict could escalate at any time, ratcheting up the conflict between Russia and Ukraine – although friction over political, economic, and energy issues is more likely than military action. The Ukrainian side is hampered by deep divisions within its political class and the lack of a coherent foreign policy strategy. Whereas President Yushchenko is now more determined than ever to lead Ukraine into NATO, opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich urged to support Moscow and recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is apparent that these tensions over foreign policy considerably exacerbate internal contradictions within Ukraine. The secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, Raisa Bogatyreva, was kicked out of the Party of the Regions on 1 September for deviating from Yanukovich's line on the Georgia crisis, and on 3 September domestic and foreign policy differences brought down the governing coalition between President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. At a juncture where internal stability and coherent foreign policy would be especially important Ukraine is again leaderless. The EU will only be able to negotiate an association agreement with Ukraine if the parliament and government in Kiev are functioning properly, so any further NATO plans to include Ukraine in the Membership Action Plan will also have to take into consideration the country's internal stability. The foreseeable energy and security conflicts with Moscow will require decisive diplomatic responses.

The EU and NATO must *firstly* urge for the internal power struggles in Ukraine to be settled, and should make domestic political stability a precondition for talks (association agreement, Membership Action Plan). With regard to Russian-Ukrainian relations, *secondly*, there should be a diplomatic offensive on the part of EU and the OSCE to integrate Russia and Ukraine and to get both to agree to abide by their friendship treaty – including the agreed date for withdrawal of the Black Sea fleet. Neither Russian questioning of the need to withdraw nor Ukrainian attempts to speed up the process would be helpful. However, until 2017 NATO should refrain from accepting Ukraine as a member, but without reducing the

⁴ Johnson's *Russia List*, (25 March 2008) 62 (internet edition).

efforts to prepare Ukraine for this step. And confidence-building among the NATO-sceptical majority of the population should not be neglected. It would be difficult to completely separate NATO-Russia relations from NATO-Ukraine relations – and not only because of the latest crisis. Instead, joint security efforts by Russia and Ukraine in the Black Sea region should be encouraged. The effectiveness of existing cooperation formats such as the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (Blackseafort) (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine) should be reassessed, and adjustments made if necessary.

The Old Fears of the New Europeans

Kai-Olaf Lang

The Georgia war drew sharp criticism from EU and NATO member states across eastern Europe. Poland and the Baltic states, especially, condemned the Russian intervention and expressed solidarity with Georgia. The most visible sign of support was the appearance of the heads of state of Poland, Estonia and Lithuania and the Latvian prime minister at a mass demonstration in Tbilisi on 12 August, together with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko. A few days earlier the heads of state of Poland and the Baltic states had already warned that Russia's actions represented an "imperialist and revisionist policy in eastern Europe". Polish President Lech Kaczyński declared in Tbilisi that he and his colleagues had come to "take up the struggle" because for the first time in a long time Russia had again "shown the face we have known for hundreds of years".

In parallel to this symbolic political act, these countries also urged their EU partners to act more decisively against Russia. But, as the peace plan mediated by the French Council presidency with Russia and Georgia showed, they did not entirely get their way, since one of their core demands, a clear commitment to the principle of territorial integrity for Georgia including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, was not included into the document. In fact, rather than launching a broad front of the opponents of Russia in the EU, the trip to Tbilisi by the five heads of state made it clear that the usual hardliners were on their own for the moment, and for all their enthusiasm to support Georgia they refrained from taking any radical steps. For example, calls from the Lithuanian opposition for a blockade of Russian military transports to and from Kaliningrad, were not taken up. One of the reasons of this is, that across the countries of Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe there is fear that support for Georgia would lead to retribution by Russia. However, retrospectively the pro-Georgian solidarity mission can still be regarded as a success from the perspective of the statesmen who travelled to Tbilisi. Not because this signal in any way has impressed Russia, nor because the public gesture of loyalty to Georgia gave any new momentum to the events. But the trip to Tbilisi of the Polish and Baltic statesmen was a message to their EU partners who now knew that they had to integrate the rigorously Russia-critical camp among the new member states.

The strong reactions from countries like Poland and the Baltic states are not really surprising. All these countries have been working hard for years to advance the transformation, democratization and Western orientation of the states of Eastern Europe and the southern Caucasus. The Baltic republics (first and foremost Lithuania) have been especially active in and

for Georgia and have been among the pacemakers of the New Friends of Georgia, a coalition of central, eastern and south-eastern European states that wishes to support Georgian reforms and the country's pro-EU and pro-NATO course. Poland and the Baltic states, especially, feel that their pessimistic geopolitical analysis of events in the post-Soviet region has been confirmed. In their view Russia aspires to return neighbouring countries to the Russian sphere of influence through a neo-imperialist reconquista or at least to put a block on their moves towards integration in the European Union and the trans-Atlantic alliance. To them, the Georgia war, appeared to be the implementation of a "Putin" or "Medvedev doctrine" in the territory of the former Soviet Union – and this echoed the suppression of the Prague Spring forty years ago. Failing to give Georgia and Ukraine a clear promise of membership at the NATO summit in Bucharest was, they say, not only a mistake but also practically encouraged Russia's intervention. Additional concern was triggered by Russia's argument that it bore responsibility to protect Russian citizens in neighbouring countries. Especially in Estonia and Latvia, where there are large Russian-speaking communities, there is deep-seated fear that Moscow could instrumentalize minority issues for foreign policy ends.

Such risk perceptions are not shared evenly among all the new member states of the EU and NATO. The left-nationalist government of Slovakia, for example, initially blamed Georgia for the conflict. But when secession for Abkhazia and South Ossetia became a real option Bratislava began treading more cautiously. Prime Minister Robert Fico now recalled that Slovakia had opposed independence for Kosovo and logically also opposed the two territories leaving the Georgian state. The background to this is a great fear of secessionist tendencies in southern Slovakia, where the Hungarian minority is the majority. The Czech Republic's political landscape is divided. President Václav Klaus declared that Russia was not the aggressor and Georgia not simply the victim, and the social democratic and communist opposition parties expressed similar understanding for Russia's behaviour. Leaders of the conservative government were quicker to condemn Moscow's actions. The war in Georgia, they said, was Russian nationalism in "humanitarian guise", and strongly recalled Germany's actions in 1938, wrote deputy prime minister Alexandr Vondra for example. Even in Poland there are different political positions within the country. Whereas the president's camp argues for an unyielding line towards Russia, the government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk has been trying to initiate a fresh start in Polish-Russian relations since taking office in autumn 2007.

Although the overall picture is complex and opinions are varying among and within particular countries, the Russia-sceptical currents in the new member states and their assessments of the Georgia war and Russia's actions are bound to have an impact on the positioning of these countries in NATO and the EU, on their relationship with the United States, and on their relations with Russia.

In NATO, especially Poland and the Baltic states will make sure their call for rapid membership for Georgia and Ukraine is heard, while at the same

time attempting to broaden and sharpen NATO's profile with respect to new security risks such as cyber-security (where Estonia is already a pioneer) and energy supply. Now that Russia has put the military option back on the table as a tool for securing influence, old discussions about NATO's strategic concept and the military policies of the member states will flare up again. Poland and the Baltic states are already emphasizing that military and security policy should return to focusing more strongly on territorial defence and must not concentrate one-sidedly on international crisis response.

The *United States* continues to be perceived as the only effective guarantor of hard security. The quick conclusion of previously sluggish Polish-American negotiations over missile defence in the wake of the Georgia conflict underlines yet again how from Warsaw's perspective (and Prague's) the presence of the US anti-missile system on its territory contains a clear Russia-related component. Washington's harsh rhetoric vis-à-vis Russia confirms the belief of politicians and the public in many countries of eastern Europe that the United States will never accept any Russian intervention in the territory of the former USSR. However, doubts must have grown in the region about whether the United States is really willing to risk a confrontation with Russia involving more than diplomatic quarrels in the event of a serious conflict in the post-Soviet region and also whether Washington really possesses effective non-military means to exercise solidarity with allies pressurized by Russia.

For that reason, despite a degree of scepticism towards certain partners in the EU, the "new Europeans" will focus their energies on the *European Union* and the instruments of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Within the EU they will continue to insist on opening up a perspective of membership for countries like Ukraine and at the same time call for a reassessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy including the development of a specifically eastern dimension. Establishing a multilateral framework for cooperation on the eastern flank of the expanded EU and intensifying bilateral relations with the partners on the eastern periphery of the Union – as proposed for example by Poland (together with Sweden) – in the form of a "Partnership for the East" would, they say, enhance the EU's influence in this neighbourhood. Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski's proposal to lift the EU sanctions imposed on Belarus should also be seen in this context.

A second field of activity in the EU will be the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Numerous member states from the eastern part of the continent have criticized the ESDP as being disproportionately focused on operations far away from the EU. Nevertheless, they have contributed to many EU missions (such as the one in Congo) for tactical reasons: The hope here was that countries like France and the UK would also intervene in the immediate interests of the new member states if required. That situation is now felt to have arrived: the EU's military and civilian crisis response should, they say, be deployed more energetically in regions such as the southern Caucasus.

Thirdly, the new member states of the EU expect their partners to show solidarity in the event of Russian countermeasures such as trade boycotts or restrictions in energy supplies. In particular, a more efficient and collective policy on energy and energy imports is generally regarded as a decisive means for containing Russian dominance. It is no coincidence that Poland's Prime Minister Tusk called for a critical reappraisal of the Nord Stream gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea in view of the Georgia conflict. With regard to the energy security and solidarity package presented by the European Commission in November 2008, Poland had made a number of proposals concerning security of supply, mechanisms of mutual assistance in the case of delivery interruptions and external energy policy. Poland and the Baltic states have also voiced reservations over opening up the EU's energy markets for Russian energy companies without having similar conditions of access to Russia for European investors.

The already complicated relations of countries like the Baltic states and Poland with Russia have been placed under even greater strain by the Georgia crisis. Since the beginning of the conflict these countries have pressed for the EU to take a harder line against Russia. Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, for example, was one of the first to call for visa restrictions to be reimposed on Russian citizens. The call for sanctions will grow louder if Russia should attempt to "punish" or even destabilize "difficult" EU member states by reducing energy supplies or raising prices or by playing the minority card.

But unless new escalations of that kind occur in Russia's dealings with Georgia or other neighbours, most of the new member countries are likely to maintain the stance of pragmatic determination that they demonstrated, for example, at the EU's emergency summit on the Caucasus crisis. Their willingness not to insist at all costs on direct punishment of Russian actions went hand in hand with political efforts to secure in return the EU's support for greater involvement in its eastern neighbourhood and a better-coordinated energy policy. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's visit to Warsaw in mid-September shows above all that in the current situation Moscow is interested in calming the waters and signalling readiness to communicate with the biggest player among the new member states. It is also characteristic that in November – apart from Lithuania – none of the new member states did resist the resumption of talks about a new EU-Russia basic agreement. It would be premature however, to understand the vigilant but cautious behaviour of Central European EU members as evidence for the beginning of a new and enduring phase of unemotional cooperation with Russia. Much depends on the old member states' readiness to factor in the fears and arguments of the novel EU partners and of course, on the willingness of those countries to actively co-shape and not to block EU-Russia relations and of course on Russia's approach towards its neighbours in the post-Soviet space and the Central European countries.

“We are all Georgians” – Perceptions of the Russian–Georgian War in the United States

Markus Kaim

The way the United States sees the Russian-Georgian conflict is determined above all by its view of Russia. Washington’s political support for Georgia is driven by the worry that under Vladimir Putin’s presidency Russian domestic and foreign policy have shifted towards a “managed democracy”. This concern is nourished by the observation of various tendencies: restoration of the power of the Kremlin, recentralization of Russian power structures, political marginalization of social groups, waning democratic freedoms and last but not least the growing instrumentalization of Russian energy corporations in the service of bringing the successor states of the Soviet Union once again more strongly under Moscow’s influence. An assessment based on these observations forms the basis for Bush administration’s – to put it mildly – more distanced Russia policy since 2005. Moscow is increasingly regarded as a global rival whose policies run counter to American interests.

Because Congress shares the Bush administration’s sceptical assessment of Russian foreign policy trends under President Putin, it is almost unanimously supportive and gives the administration pretty much *carte blanche* on Russian policy.¹ Republican senator and presidential candidate John McCain, especially, has repeatedly argued that the gap between Russia and the West is growing and called for a stronger conditionalization of relations. Best known is his call to exclude Russia from the G8. Because Moscow plainly does not share the West’s values, he says, Russia is ultimately not a reliable strategic partner and it is quite possible that it will increasingly aggressively assert its regional and global ambitions. So, he says, states in the post-Soviet region that come under Russian pressure should be granted assistance by the European Union and the United States, and be linked into the EU or NATO.²

Supporters of this position feel vindicated by the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008, so it is no surprise that those who see the United States and Georgia as strategic partners in a conflict with an imperial Russia have received an additional boost.³ Limited cooperation with Moscow is certainly possible, they say, and many would agree also necessary to some

1 See for example the hearing of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on 29 June 2006, where the aforementioned scepticism about the direction of Russia’s foreign policy and domestic politics is clearly expressed in the title, “Russia: Back to the Future?”, <http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2006/hr060629a.html>.

2 See John McCain’s speech of 4 January 2006 on “Nato’s Future Role in International Peacekeeping” at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, at www.securityconference.de.

3 John McCain, “We Are All Georgians”, *Wall Street Journal*, 14 August 2008.

extent if certain overarching goals of American diplomacy are to be achieved. But the idea of a strategic partnership with Russia based on shared values – as cherished by many European governments – has remained foreign to the American debate.

The successful American request to suspend the meetings of the NATO–Russia Council shows that the United States wishes to pursue its conflict with Russia through multilateral organizations as well as bilateral channels. So it comes as no surprise that Washington is confronting its allies in other international organizations too (for example G8, WTO, OSCE) with requests to modify Western policies towards Russia to suit the changed circumstances. A potentially central question here is whether and with what instruments Moscow can be persuaded to act as a reliable long-term diplomatic partner of Europe and the United States (a wish that President Putin has often reiterated). The goal here must be to encourage Russia to enter bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the West without at the same time promoting an international order based on clearly separated spheres of interest and influence.

The proponents of American plans to give Georgia membership of NATO point to the values the country shares with the “West” and to the perceived Russian threat to the country’s political sovereignty (and increasingly also its territorial integrity). Washington’s interest is to contain Russian influence in the post-Soviet region – and accordingly strengthen its own – by anchoring Tbilisi firmly in the Western security organizations.

American support for Georgia is also reinforced by the country’s position in the Bush administration’s global democratization strategy. The American-supported “Rose Revolution” of 2003 fitted perfectly into a strategy predicated on spreading democracy as a vital precondition for international peace and security. These ideas have recently taken a more prominent place in the Bush administration’s thoughts than the idea of Georgia’s importance for oil and gas transit routes. However, since the end of 2007 a certain disillusionment has set in. The violence of the Georgian security forces against demonstrators in November 2007 even led Washington to exercise very clear criticism of the Saakashvili government, and the US State Department explicitly welcomed the decision to bring forward the presidential elections to 5 January 2008. After Saakashvili’s victory the Bush administration and Congress repeatedly praised the elections as free and fair, but at the same time called on the government in Tbilisi to work towards domestic political reconciliation. Some observers even called for Georgian NATO membership to be tied to the condition of such progress. A glance at the figures for direct security assistance shows that American policy on Georgia is in fact more differentiated and complex than the rhetoric would suggest. Although the State Department and Pentagon ran various programmes to support the Georgian security authorities, their total volume between 1992 and 2005 amounted to only \$380 million, too little to serve as evidence of special priority for Georgia in American calculations.

The political fallout of the Russia-Georgia conflict impacts directly on the American presidential election campaign. Both political camps verbally supported the Georgian leadership: visiting Georgia in mid-August, Democratic vice-presidential nominee Joe Biden sharply criticized Russian policies and interpreted the conflict as a fundamental Western struggle to promote democracy and freedom using similar rhetoric to Republican presidential candidate John McCain. But the Russian invasion of Georgia ultimately strengthened the Republican candidate who was able to considerably narrow the gap to Democratic candidate Barack Obama in all the polls at the time and in some even to overtake his rival. Tensions with Russia seem to have strengthened the case that McCain possesses the foreign policy experience that the office requires.⁴ McCain condemned the Russian invasion more vigorously than President Bush and considerably more vehemently than Senator Obama. Individual conservative commentators then accused Obama of “appeasement”, a strong indication that historical analogies play a role in American interpretations.

In its actions the United States has practised a rather restrained policy during the course of the crisis. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney were quick to visit Tbilisi after the crisis broke out, but the United States left shuttle diplomacy and the central mediating role to others. Although the American military flew the Georgian contingent back from Iraq and supplied humanitarian aid by sea, there is no publicly available evidence that the Georgian leadership’s expectation of broader military support was fulfilled. On 3 September President Bush merely announced financial aid amounting to one billion dollars over several years to develop the Georgian economy and fund humanitarian projects.

The consequences of Russian behaviour in the Caucasus war are likely to be gravest for the question of Georgian membership of NATO. The initial responses suggest that faced with a resurgence of Russian confidence the United States is likely to dig its heels in even more firmly over a concrete perspective for Georgian membership of the North Atlantic alliance. Both the main American parties support that step more solidly than ever and are calling for corresponding decisions at the December 2008 meeting of NATO foreign ministers. European policies aiming to delay this step in the hope of a different position from the new administration in Washington will not lead to the desired result. The Russia-Georgia conflict has advanced the cause of Georgian NATO membership – at least in the United States – more strongly than Russian or Georgian leaders could have imagined.

⁴ Alister Bull, “McCain: Russia Crisis Highlights Need for Experience”, *Washington Post*, 13 August 2008.

First Priority: Keep the Alliance Together

Frank Kupferschmidt

The widely cherished hopes that Russia under President Dmitri Medvedev would shift towards greater liberality have taken a knock. Rivalry in the post-Soviet region – one of several areas of conflict between Russia and NATO – has heightened significantly and the Caucasus war has dealt a severe setback to NATO-Russia relations.¹ It is still too early to decide whether the relationship will have to be completely reassessed, but Russia's disproportionate actions certainly represent a watershed that demands an unequivocal response by the North Atlantic alliance. What do the events mean for relationships within the alliance, and what consequences must be drawn for relations with Russia?

Difficult consensus

NATO's priority must be to keep the alliance united in its response to Russia's actions in Georgia, without slamming all the doors on Moscow. For if we want to know what Russia wants, what reasoning guides its actions, there will have to be consultations away from the glare of media publicity and its stage-managed rhetorical test of strength. That is a difficult challenge, because not all the allies share this interpretation. The war in the Caucasus has very clearly revealed that the Atlantic alliance has long since fallen into diverging interest groups and has difficulty in forging a robust consensus out of widely differing ideas coloured by historical experiences and fears.

Their recent history leaves part of the central and eastern European NATO members – the Baltic states, Poland and the Czech Republic – deeply mistrustful of their overpowerful neighbour Russia. For that reason they seek support especially from the United States and Britain and have always been very sceptical about cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council. Evidence of the loss of confidence in timely assistance from the alliance is seen in Poland's efforts to back up its NATO membership through a bilateral defence clause with the United States and in its unexpectedly quick decision – following long discussions – to sign the treaty allowing elements of the American missile defence system to be stationed on Polish soil. If this trend continues the credibility and effectiveness of NATO as a whole will be called into question. Confronted with Russian claims in the Barents Sea and the Arctic, Norway, too, seems to be becoming increas-

¹ On the areas of conflict, see Hannes Adomeit and Frank Kupferschmidt, *Russia-Nato Relations, Stagnation or Revitalization?* Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Research Paper 2, May 2008, Berlin, pp. 15–23.

ingly disquiet. On the other side of the spectrum, Germany and France lead attempts to assist Russia in becoming a reliable partner through integration in Western structures. So far they have been able to count on the support of five or six other members. But does Moscow have any intention of following a path that would limit its hegemonic ambitions? After the invasion in the Caucasus that must be doubted. In this context, adhering unconditionally to Germany's existing policy towards Russia would lead to the members who feel threatened increasingly losing confidence in the protective function of the alliance and to growing demands for a discussion about its political direction. The NATO members in the Black Sea region, on the other hand, seem to regard the events in the Caucasus largely as a regional problem despite their geographical proximity. There could be a new, important role for Turkey here.

Following the events in Georgia, the issue of collective defence – Article 5 of the NATO Treaty – will probably play a greater role in the debates about the new strategic concept for the alliance, and the attempt to win Moscow's acceptance for NATO enlargement on Russia's periphery seems to have become more difficult – if not impossible. The Atlantic alliance must keep its promises given to membership candidates, even in the face of Russian opposition if need be. The line taken with the post-Soviet states also needs to be discussed more seriously than hitherto. The alliance must not raise expectations it is unwilling or unable to fulfil.

Following the failure of the European security structures in the Caucasus crisis the NATO states must also think about how to respond to the altered situation in the longer term. Are organizations like the OSCE still up to the tasks for which they were created in a completely different political environment? What new instruments would be conceivable and useful? These essential questions will play an important role in the discussion about a new strategic concept for the alliance.

The Kremlin has already named its goal. It wants to see a new security architecture created for the whole of Europe, as President Medvedev outlined in June in Berlin. He gave further details later, but so far, a lot of questions remain unanswered. For the West as a whole and Berlin in particular including the United States, Canada and NATO into any new structure is crucial, for without the trans-Atlantic alliance, without coordination with the United States, the EU will not have enough clout for the foreseeable future. The status-conscious government in Moscow is interested in being treated as an equal by Washington, and less in comparison with London, Paris, Berlin (still less Brussels). Here the Kremlin is letting the gigantic dollar and euro inflows from the energy sector blind it to the true state of the country and its perspectives for the future. A shrinking population, modernization deficits, inadequate infrastructure investment and lacking economic reforms are creating considerable risks.

It is a plain fact that Russia and NATO need each other to resolve urgent international problems ranging from preventing Iran acquiring nuclear weapons to fighting terrorism, stabilizing Afghanistan and launching new arms control initiatives. Europe also depends on Russian energy supplies,

while Russia depends on foreign currency revenues from energy exports and on European help and know-how to modernize its economy. Precisely because there is such a high degree of mutual interdependence NATO was to express its criticism clearly and act more decisively.

NATO not a party to the conflict

Responses to Russia's actions in Georgia had to be weighed very carefully. And possible Russian reactions that could impact negatively on NATO had always to be taken into consideration. Suspending meetings of the NATO-Russia Council sent an ambiguous signal, because it reduced contacts precisely at a juncture where they were most needed. Here the EU jumped into the breach. To send the NATO Response Force and AWACS aircraft to Georgia – as was discussed by some alliance partners – would have made little sense because it would have had an escalating effect and simply led to direct confrontation with Russia. Despite a number of open questions, the alliance took sides in this conflict without being a party to the conflict itself. Restricting military cooperation would have been easiest to bring about, especially as the lion's share is funded by the NATO states while the Russian armed forces derive the most profit. The possibility of restricting the work of Russian liaison staffs to alliance headquarters should also have been considered, although that would probably have had negative consequences for NATO's military mission in Moscow.

In order to save face Moscow is pre-empting further NATO responses by partially freezing cooperation itself and claiming that the Atlantic alliance is more interested in cooperation than Russia and also profits more strongly from it. The Russian Federation is plainly seeking to strengthen or at least secure its own position as a new world order takes shape after the end of unipolarity. In this context it apparently no longer regards very close cooperation with NATO and the United States as beneficial for its own interests and is therefore trying to detach itself, especially from the United States which in recent years has lost international esteem largely because of the Iraq War. In reality the central issue is rivalry between Russia and the United States. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov confirmed this in the *Wall Street Journal* on 20 August 2008, where he wrote that the United States had to choose between Russia and Georgia.

Russia and Georgia, the opponents in the conflict, are both members of the Partnership for Peace, and Russia in principle occupies a privileged position as a member of the NATO-Russia council. But such inclusion was unable to prevent the conflict. NATO must now clearly explain what it expects: that both governments take seriously the rules of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; that Russia, the biggest European state, restricts itself to averting immediate anger to its "citizens" and peacekeeping forces and refrains from punishment actions, illegal occupation of sovereign states and recognizing unilateral secessions; that Georgia, which wishes to become a member of

NATO and the EU, abstain from using military force against a section of its population that it says it wishes to keep within the state.

One factor mitigating against a decision to include Georgia in the Membership Action Plan as soon as December is that President Mikheil Saakashvili could feel that his actions had been vindicated, possibly encouraging him to provoke new clashes. He plainly ignored American advice and warnings against military intervention in South Ossetia. On the other hand a more concrete perspective of NATO membership could encourage him to act moderately and follow the NATO principles. It is currently difficult to judge whether that would have any prospect of success, but such agreements could be considered. For the moment the steps already agreed by NATO – a joint commission with Georgia, reconstruction aid, and diplomatic support for the demand for territorial integrity – should suffice to persuade the government in Tbilisi of NATO's continuing interest in Georgia joining the alliance.

Even if Ukraine would not appear to be threatened in the short term an additional signal is needed to assure it of the alliance's support. Stepping up political exchanges, holding a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine commission in Kiev at an early date, and specific support in expanding and accelerating reform and cooperation projects could fulfil this function.

Whether the alliance will succeed in containing the ambitions of a re-invigorated, powerful Russia and making a fresh attempt to forge a partnership under more realistic preconditions than to date will also depend on Russia's willingness to cooperate. That demands unity on the Western side, and compromises will have to be made within the alliance – however hard that is – to keep the members together. No NATO response will have any chance of being understood correctly by the Kremlin unless it sends a signal of unity and determination.

The EU's Southern Caucasus Policy under the French Council Presidency: Between Consultation, Cooperation and Confrontation

Annegret Bendiek and Daniela Schwarzer

The positive signals from the Brussels emergency summit of 1 September cannot disguise the deep-rooted problems of European foreign and security policy. The European Union's response to the Caucasus crisis of mid-August 2008 supplies two indications of its foreign policy weakness. Firstly, it showed that the twenty-seven member states have no common position on how the EU should respond to the conflicting parties, especially Russia. Secondly, the crisis revealed the EU's inadequacies in the field of conflict prevention (see text box page 44).

The EU's relations with Russia are shaped by the tensions between central and eastern European security interests and western Europe's energy needs. Whereas France, Germany and Italy tend to take a moderate position in relations with Russia (not least due to their dependency on Russian energy supplies) some of the central and eastern European states (first and foremost Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic states, but also Sweden) see the crisis in the Caucasus as an immediate threat to their own security and therefore join Britain (as the foreign policy ally of the United States) in calling for the EU to take a harder line on Russia.

These differing preferences are also reflected in the different approaches to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), where major political projects such as the Mediterranean Union initiated by Paris stand unconnectedly side by side with the Polish/Swedish proposal for deepening cooperation with the EU's eastern neighbours. It also remains unclear how the eastern partnership will fit in with the Northern Dimension (EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland). But in terms of the Georgia conflict, it is even more serious that the EU has not yet developed any successful instruments for preventing conflict in its eastern neighbourhood. Nor does the Polish/Swedish proposal for deepening contain any forward-thinking proposals as to how the EU's proposed multilateral cooperation with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine could constructively complement the existing EU-Russia relationship.

Despite the divergence of interests within the EU and the many unresolved issues, France has been able to use its Council presidency to make a small yet visible contribution to temporarily de-escalating the conflict. President Nicolas Sarkozy positioned the EU as the mediator (at that time the only one), before NATO's twenty-six foreign ministers had even gathered for their crisis meeting on 19 August and in a phase where the United States was showing no inclination to play an active mediating role. His visits to Moscow and Tbilisi on 12 August 2008 helped the parties to

negotiate a ceasefire, and Russia agreed to begin withdrawing its forces from the Georgian heartland on 18 August.

Sarkozy's quickly arranged trip to Georgia and Russia was the EU's only tangible short-term response to the crisis in the Caucasus. Although Franco-German and EU-wide consultations were held beforehand, there was no common EU position. So individual EU member states criticized not only the French president's visit itself, but also the terms of the peace plan he mediated. Lithuania, for example, complained straight away that the French initiative failed to guarantee Georgia's territorial integrity. As so often, public disagreement over EU diplomatic initiatives undermined the Union's credibility.

Following the events in Georgia and the positioning of the EU as the only mediator in the conflict, the EU member states now find themselves forced to rethink their previous policies in the southern Caucasus. The most important variable here is how to handle Russia. Three alternative paradigms offer themselves to the EU.

1. Consensus-building within Europe and consultation with Russia

Russia's latest demonstration of military strength and power aspirations in neighbouring territories has clearly widened the gap between the EU member states that call for a more confrontational course towards Russia and those that prefer to pursue cooperation. The only question that never provoked controversy was direct support for refugees and displaced people in Georgia. The European Commission and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) provided six million euros in August for humanitarian aid such as drinking water, food and temporary accommodation, while individual member states contributed another nine million euros.

At the emergency summit called by the French Council presidency on 1 September 2008 the EU member states initially displayed unanimity and agreed eleven points on how to proceed with respect to Russia and Georgia. The following are worth singling out: The EU criticized Russia's policy towards Georgia as "unacceptable" because it violated Georgia's territorial integrity and restricted its freedom to choose which alliances it joined. The negotiations over a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia were postponed indefinitely. The talks will only be resumed if Russia has withdrawn from the Georgian heartland by mid-October. The EU wants to remain present in the Caucasus through the vehicles of the United Nations and the Organization for Peace and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Beyond that, it has sent an European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission to monitor the ceasefire agreement. The EU will continue supporting Georgia with humanitarian aid and reconstruction assistance. As well as a donors' conference and talks about a free trade zone, it is also planned to lift visa restrictions on Georgian citizens entering the EU.

It is quite possible that Russia is biased to become a new hegemonial power of restoring former spheres of influence and in the process give rise to new disagreements between EU member states. The current Council presidency could try to establish a small group of EU member states representing the widest possible range of stances on Russia to act as consensus-creators. Following the great expansion of 2004, the obvious core of such a group would be the Weimar Triangle, supplemented by Britain and the two countries following France in the Council presidency, Sweden and the Czech Republic. There is certainly a chance that Germany, France and Poland working with selected partners would be able to find a foreign policy consensus on Russia that was acceptable throughout the EU, especially given that Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski see Europe as the channel of choice for Polish foreign policy. They have improved their country's relations with Germany and before the Caucasus war were actually in the process of opening up a dialogue with Russia.

On the 10 November, the EU decided to return to the negotiating table with Russia in order to agree a new partnership treaty. But Lithuania has refused to bless the move, describing it "a mistake". Consultations with Russia by individual member states and the EU as a whole are necessary to make sure the distance between the two sides does not become so large that it ends up being very difficult to bridge (a tendency that is also encouraged by the American course). The conflicts that need tackling within the EU and with Russia are obvious. Apart from the acute crisis in the Caucasus, they include the EU's unilateral recognition of Kosovo, the US missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic, and common energy policy in the neighbourhood.

2. Cooperation with Russia

Certain EU member states are interested in maintaining or even expanding existing relations with Russia. Alongside dependency on Russian energy imports and other economic interests, they are motivated by the conviction that none of the crucial global problems can be solved without Russia, certainly not those in Russia's own backyard. Accordingly the European Commission emphasized in its communication of December 2006 on strengthening the ENP that a state of lasting peace in the neighbourhood can only be achieved with Russia's participation. But in line with its self-image as a "global actor" Russia rejected integration in the ENP, instead agreeing a "strategic partnership" with the EU designed to shape four "common spaces": a Common Economic Space; a Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice; a Common Space of External Security and a Common Space of Research and Education, including Cultural Aspects.

Despite the crisis in the southern Caucasus and differences within the EU about how to deal with Russia, certain core states of the EU might seek

EU Initiatives in the Caucasus

Since the 1990s the EU has been working to integrate the states of the southern Caucasus and central Asia in international transport and energy networks through two TACIS sub-programmes – TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) and INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas to Europe). In July 1999 the EU's Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with the three states of the southern Caucasus came into force to bring Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia gradually into a wider context of cooperation in Europe and its neighbourhood. Four years later the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched to develop the EU's relations with its south-eastern neighbours on the basis of shared political values and economic interests.

The EU likes to emphasize that a strict distinction must be made between the ENP and the EU expansion process. It is notable in this connection that the three states of the southern Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – were only later included in the ENP, following protests by the European Parliament. At the same an EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus was appointed (currently the Swedish diplomat Peter Semneby). The late inclusion of the three countries in the ENP also delayed the preparation of the corresponding five-year national action plans, which only came into force in 2006.

When the 150-member Russian-led OSCE mission on the Russian-Georgian border expired in 2005, Georgia asked the EU to take over the border mission. The EU responded by sending a team to support the EU Special Representative on border protection issues. In January 2007 an EU fact-finding mission made proposals for improving EU policy on the ground, but further-reaching proposals such as stronger support for civil society, opening EU information offices and sending EU police missions to Abkhazia and South Ossetia were not politically viable in the EU-27.

The EU is part of the OSCE's Economic Rehabilitation Programme (ERP) and enjoys observer status in the Joint Control Commission on South Ossetia. In the Minsk Group that is working to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and in the UN Secretary-General's Group of Friends of Georgia (Abkhazia conflict) only individual EU member states are represented (Germany, France, Britain). As the coordinator of the UN Group of Friends of Georgia, Germany is working hard to negotiate a solution to the conflict over the breakaway Georgian republic of Abkhazia. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier travelled to Georgia, the Abkhazia region and Russia to seek an acceptable solution for all affected parties. Germany's negotiating initiative in July 2008 was unable to achieve a breakthrough in the peace negotiations between the conflicting parties.

to intensify dialogue in order to prevent Russia slipping into isolation. Germany, France, the Benelux countries and Italy could continue the negotiations over the Treaty on Strategic Partnership. One central project in this partnership could be the planned development of a Common Space of External Security. A cooperative course towards Russia would initially find the approval of just a few EU member states, but it only really makes sense if it enjoys the fundamental support of all the EU member states. The “new

Europeans" will have to accept that urgent international problems are unsolvable without Russia's participation.

The goal of a cooperative policy towards Russia must be to prevent new arms races in Europe and jointly tackle global and regional problems (whether they be hard security risks like Iranian nuclear weapons or soft risks like organized crime). The precondition for the success of such a policy would be a willingness on Russia's part to take the EU's interests into account in its activities in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

3. Confrontation with Moscow

Some of the countries of central and eastern Europe that joined the EU in 2004 are pursuing a course of confrontation towards Russia. For instance, Poland delayed the EU's negotiation of a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia. The Polish-Russian conflict escalated when Russia restricted energy supplies to Europe and banned imports of Polish meat. More recently – two weeks after the fighting broke out in Georgia – Poland signed a treaty (which had been under negotiation for two months) allowing the United States to station missile defence systems on its territory. Ukraine has also offered Washington the use of its missile early warning system.

When the conflict in Georgia escalated in August, the states of central and eastern Europe, supported by Britain and Sweden, called for the negotiations over a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia to be suspended and for visa restrictions to be reimposed. Other sanctions were also proposed, such as refusing membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO), excluding Russia from the G8, freezing Russian bank accounts or boycotting the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia. Since the spring 2008 NATO summit, some of the new members like Poland have been calling for quick NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine.

The results of the 1 September summit show that Poland and the Baltic states are certainly in a position to influence the EU's Russia policy. In view of the ongoing tensions in Georgia, one of the tasks of the French Council presidency is to sensitize the EU to central and eastern Europeans' fears about Russia, while at the same preventing a policy of confrontation on the part of individual states from narrowing the options for the EU as a whole. A harder line would perhaps increase the political pressure on Moscow in the short term. But in the longer term confrontation would be counterproductive for overall European security. Foreign and security policy interests in the EU-27 diverge and the central and eastern European states will not succeed in preventing "old Europe" from coming to an arrangement with Russia, so in the medium term there is a risk of a deep and lasting internal rift in the EU.

Appendix

Timeline of the Russian-Georgian Conflict (3 April to 3 September 2008)

Phase 1: Escalation (3 April to 7 August 2008)

3 April	NATO summit in Bucharest approves membership perspective for Ukraine and Georgia, but without setting out a timetable for accession talks.
16 April	Russian President Vladimir Putin orders Russian authorities to establish quasi-official relations with the Georgia's breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia regards this act as a breach of international law.
20 April	A Russian MiG-29 is claimed to have shot down an unmanned Georgian reconnaissance drone over Abkhazia. Russia denies any involvement. A UN report later confirms the Georgian version.
29 April	Russia sends troop reinforcements to Abkhazia, purportedly to thwart Georgian invasion plans. The following day NATO accuses the Russian leadership of stirring tensions with Georgia.
4 May	Abkhazian authorities report shooting down two Georgian reconnaissance drones over the territory they control. Georgia denies that such flights were taking place.
6 May	Georgia declares that the stationing of additional Russian troops in Abkhazia has brought the possibility of war "very close".
30 May	Georgia says it has stopped unmanned reconnaissance flights over Abkhazia, but reserves the right to resume them.
31 May	Putin, now prime minister, says he supports a Georgian proposal that would give Abkhazia autonomy but not full independence. During May Russia sends more soldiers to South Ossetia (about 500 paratroopers), and 400 railway troops are deployed to Abkhazia to repair a railway line south of Sukhumi.
4 July	Three killed in exchanges of fire in the border region between South Ossetia and Georgia. South Ossetia claims this was a Georgian attack and calls for a "general mobilization". Government in Tbilisi says it was merely responding to a rebel attack. Russia accuses Georgia of "deliberate aggression".
5 July	Russian President Dmitri Medvedev urges Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to avoid aggravating tensions in Georgia's breakaway regions.
8 July	Russian fighter planes enter Georgian airspace over South Ossetia. Russian leadership says the mission's purpose is to "cool down the hotheads in Tbilisi".
9 July	Russia and Georgia trade accusations of airspace violations by warplanes.

10 July	Georgia recalls its ambassador from Moscow.
15 July	Russia conducts Caucasus 2008 military exercise on its border with Georgia, ostensibly as training for “special peacekeeping operations”. At the same time 1,000 US troops participate in a Georgian military exercise.
17 July	German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier travels to Georgia, Abkhazia and Russia to solicit support for a German peace initiative, but encounters strong reservations. Germany is currently chair of the UN Secretary-General’s Group of Friends of Georgia.
21 July	South Ossetia accuses Georgian forces of kidnapping four South Ossetians. Tbilisi says its forces had arrested suspected drug dealers.
25 July	A car bomb in South Ossetia kills one person.
1 August	Government of South Ossetia reports six people killed by Georgian gunfire. The Georgian government says the incident was provoked by the South Ossetian side.
2 August	Georgia reports South Ossetian attacks on six Georgian-controlled towns in South Ossetia.
3 August	Russia warns of a “major” conflict.
5 August	Russian special envoy Yuri Popov declares that Russia will not stand on the sidelines if the situation continues to escalate. Georgia and South Ossetia agree to start direct talks on 7 August (later cancelled).
16:30–17:50	Shooting between Khetagurovo and Avnevi involving infantry weapons and armoured vehicles.
18:00–19:00	Shooting between the villages of Ubiati and Khetagurovo on the Ossetian side and Georgian-controlled Avnevi and Nuli. Weapons of different calibers are used, including mortars.
23:40	Fighting between Georgians and Ossetians near Sarabuki involving infantry weapons and mortars. The Georgian side opens fire from armoured vehicles. The villages of Sarabuki and Dmenisi come under fire, including posts of the Russian peacekeeping forces. The Ossetian side responds with mortar fire and large-calibre weapons.
6 August	
00:20	Georgian side uses artillery at Kere.
01:20–03:40	Renewed shooting at the village of Prisi with infantry weapons and mortars.
03:50	Ceasefire.
06:35	Peace-keeping forces observe a heavy exchange of fire in the southern and south-eastern outskirts of Tskhinvali. During the course of the day brief exchanges of fire are observed in the aforementioned areas. In the night peacekeeping forces observe eight flights, five of which are Georgian Su-25 ground attack jets coming from the south (Gori) northwards towards Dzhava.

7 August	Yuri Popov, Russian special envoy and co-chair of the Joint Control Commission on South Ossetia, fails in his attempt to start talks between Georgia and the unrecognized South Ossetian government.
11:00	Georgia reports attacks by South Ossetian forces on the villages of Nuli, Avnevi and Vanati.
14:00	Georgia reports South Ossetian forces launching massive attacks on the Georgian base at in Avnevi.
14:30	The Georgian army moves field artillery and selfpropelled guns to the administrative border with South Ossetia.
15:45	Citing an order from their commander, the Georgian military observers leave the Command of the Joint Staff of the Joint Peacekeeping Force and the observation posts where agreements provide for the presence of Georgian military observers.
15:50	Khetagurovo comes under heavy artillery fire from Georgian-controlled territory.
19:10	In a televised address Georgia's President Saakashvili offers Tskhinvali peace talks; according to Georgian sources this includes a promise of autonomy to "European standards" with Russia as the guarantee power.
22:30	Georgia reports South Ossetian attacks on Georgian-controlled villages.
23:30	Georgian foreign ministry reports all Georgian positions near Tskhinvali coming under fire from South Ossetian forces.

Phase 2: Military confrontation (8 to 12 August 2008)

8 August	
00:10	Georgian artillery shells Tskhinvali. Five Georgian Su-25 jets attack in the Tkverneti district. Many civilian victims.
9:45	Russia bombs civilian and military targets in Georgia's heartland.
10:00	South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity announces that there is fighting in the outskirts of Tskhinvali. Fires have broken out in the town.
11:00	South Ossetian security council asks Russia to come to the republic's aid.
14:00	Georgian foreign ministry reports that Georgian armed forces have captured Tskhinvali.
15:00	Georgia declares a three-hour ceasefire to create a "humanitarian corridor".
15:30	Dmitri Medvedev declares that Russia will not allow the killing of its citizens in South Ossetia to go unpunished.

8 August	
16:00	Russian defence ministry announces that reinforcements have been sent to South Ossetia to support the Russian peacekeeping forces. A column of Russian armoured vehicles enters Tskhinvali. Saakashvili declares that his country is at war with Russia.
16:30	Russia's NATO ambassador, Dmitry Rogozin, sends a diplomatic note to all the NATO member states' missions in Brussels warning against giving further support to Saakashvili. Fighting continues throughout the day and the following night. During the course of the day approx. 10,000 Russian troops move into South Ossetia through the Roki tunnel. Another 7,000 to 10,000 Russian soldiers are stationed on the Georgian-Abkhaz border. The flagship of the Russian Black Sea fleet, the cruiser Moskva patrols off the Georgian coast.
9 August	
00:00	Reception of Russian television stations is jammed in Georgia. Russia suspends air travel to and from Georgia.
00:14	Eduard Kokoity announces that up to 1,400 people have been killed in Tskhinvali. Human Rights Watch is later unable to corroborate the figure. Press office of the Russian land forces reports 12 Russian peacekeepers killed and 50 injured.
00:50	After two Security Council meetings on the situation in Georgia on 8 August, Russia's ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, accuses several members of the Security Council of siding with Georgia.
02:02	Russian warplanes bomb the port of Poti and the Georgian military base at Senaki, causing deaths and injuries.
03:18	Condoleezza Rice appeals to Russia to respect Georgia's territorial integrity.
04:55	Press office of the Russian land forces reports that Russian forces opened fire on Georgian positions during the night and also fired back in response to attempts to shell Tskhinvali.
11:13	Russian air force bombs Kopitnari air base in the town of Kutaisi; local population reported to have been evacuated.
11:30	Units of the 76th Guards Airborne Division from Pskov arrive in Tskhinvali. All Georgian troops have left the town.
16:55	Aircraft supporting Abkhazia bomb Georgian forces in the Kodori Gorge.
19:00	Reuters reports Georgian sources claiming 129 Georgian soldiers and officers killed and 748 injured.
10 August	
00:11	EU appeals to Georgia and Russia to stop the fighting in South Ossetia.
03:00	South Ossetian sources announce the destruction of one Georgian bomber and 12 tanks in the course of the fighting.

- 09:06 Russia's human rights ombudsman, Vladimir Lukin, proposes setting up an international tribunal to punish those who ordered the destruction of Tskhinvali.
- 11:20 Units from the Russian Black Sea fleet approach the coast of Georgia.
- 17:53 Official Ukrainian sources warn that the ships of the Black Sea fleet could be prevented from returning to Sevastopol.
- 18:45 Medvedev orders the state prosecution service to collect evidence of genocide in South Ossetia.
- 22:30 Russian warships sink a Georgian gunboat after it approached them.

11 August

- 00:26 Russian paratroopers arrive in Abkhazia.
- 07:00 Georgian army resumes shelling of Russian military positions near Tskhinvali.
- 11:50 At a meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Volodymyr Ohryzko, Saakashvili thanks Ukraine for its "clear and balanced position".
- 13:42 South Ossetian interior ministry reports that Georgia has blown up the Kekhvi canal in Tskhinvali. Cellars are flooded.
- 18:20 Six Georgian attack helicopters hit targets near Tskhinvali.
- 19:55 Alexander Lomaya, secretary of Georgia's National Security Council, says that Russian troops have occupied Gori.
- 21:17 Russian defence ministry denies reports that its forces have occupied Gori.
- 22:25 Russian defence ministry declares: "We are not planning to advance on Tbilisi".

12 August

- 03:59 US President George W. Bush declares that Russia's invasion of Georgia was "inconsistent with assurances ... that its objectives were limited to restoring the status quo in South Ossetia that existed before fighting began".
- 13:20 Medvedev declares the operation to enforce peace in South Ossetia over, and orders the Russian military to mop up nests of violent resistance in the conflict zone.

**Phase 3:
International crisis and initial conflict management
(12 August to 3 September 2008)**

12 August	
16:40	Saakashvili announces at a rally that Georgia is will leave the CIS.
18:13	The members of the NATO Council meet and declare their support for Georgia and condemn Russia's "disproportionate" use of force.
18:21	Medvedev and Sarkozy agree a six-point plan to end the South Ossetia conflict. According to Georgian sources, Russian forces enter Zugdidi and the port of Poti during the course of the day.
13 August	The presidents of Poland, Ukraine, Estonia and Lithuania and the prime minister of Latvia demonstrate their support for Georgia at a rally in Tbilisi. International exercise involving Russian warships cancelled at the behest of the United States. Saakashvili declares his willingness to end the conflict on the basis of the six-point plan negotiated between Medvedev and Sarkozy but sees need for clarification of certain points. US House of Representatives calls on Russia to withdraw its forces from Georgia immediately. Russia rejects Georgian reports that Russian forces are occupying Gori and other Georgian cities. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says the remaining troops are merely clearing up unexploded shells and other munitions for the safety of the population. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice flies to Tbilisi, accuses Russia of violating the ceasefire and threatens to isolate Russia internationally.
14 August	The internationally unrecognized republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia agree to a ceasefire. Their presidents Kokoity (South Ossetia) and Bagapsh (Abkhazia) sign the six-point plan. Medvedev gives them a promise to "support any decision by the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia about the status of their republics." Georgia formally leaves the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).
15 August	Saakashvili says that NATO shares the blame for the escalation of the conflict with Russia, because it did not give Georgia a perspective of membership in Bucharest: "Russia saw Bucharest as a new Munich".

15 August	<p>German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives in Sochi to discuss the situation with Medvedev. She insists on preserving the territorial integrity of Georgia and recognition of the legitimacy of Georgia's democratically elected government. At the subsequent press conference Medvedev calls Russia the guarantor of security in the Caucasus and reiterates the country's peacekeeping mandate.</p>
16 August	<p>Representatives of the German social democratic, Christian democratic and liberal parties (SPD, CDU/CSU and FDP) exclude the possibility of Georgia joining NATO quickly, but uphold a perspective of membership in the longer term.</p> <p>Russia signs the six-point plan, but indicates the need for "additional security measures" before it can withdraw its troops from Georgia.</p>
17 August	<p>Visiting Tbilisi, German Chancellor Merkel calls for all fighting to cease.</p>
19 August	<p>Emergency meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels discusses the future of NATO-Russia relations. The NATO Council condemns Russia's actions in Georgia, calls Russia's use of force "inappropriate" and underlines "Georgia's territorial integrity". In view of the situation the Council temporarily suspends the activities of the NATO-Russia Council.</p> <p>Russia's NATO ambassador Dmitry Rogozin announces that the withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgia has begun, but will take time. He also says that peacekeeping forces will remain in South Ossetia.</p> <p>British Foreign Minister David Miliband calls Russia's actions in Georgia a violation of international law and expresses doubts about Russia's reliability as a partner on the international stage.</p> <p>Georgia permits 20 OSCE observers to enter the parts of the country bordering on South Ossetia.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov states that Russia will draw the consequences from NATO's stance on Georgia: "business as usual" is unlikely.</p>
22 August	<p>Russia announces that it has withdrawn all its forces from Georgia (apart from peacekeeping units) and thus fulfilled the requirements of the six-point plan.</p>
26 August	<p>President Medvedev follows the proposal of both houses of the Russian parliament and officially recognizes the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.</p> <p>German Chancellor Angela Merkel says that Russia's recognition of the territories is unacceptable.</p> <p>The Russian foreign ministry warns against rearming Georgia with supplies from the West. Georgian rearmament could "lead to new adventures".</p>

27 August	Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announces that Russia is willing to withdraw its forces from the “security zone” if reliable international controls are put in place.
28 August	The Georgian parliament passes a resolution declaring Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be occupied territories and calling for diplomatic relations with Russia to be broken off.
1 September	Citing the agreement of 2003, Georgia calls for all peacekeeping forces to be withdrawn from Abkhazia. At the EU emergency summit on the Caucasus crisis Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia draws strong condemnation. The EU says it is willing to participate in resolving the conflict “also with a presence on the ground”. Talks on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Russia are suspended as long as Russian troops are on Georgian soil. Georgia is offered reconstruction aid (including Abkhazia and South Ossetia).
2 September	Russia declares its willingness to enter talks on replacing Russian troops in the “security zone” with international forces.
3 September	Russia closes its embassy and consulate in Tbilisi.

Compiled by Bernd Bentlin and Katharina Hoffmann using information from Russian, Georgian and international media. Contradictions between the sources have intentionally been allowed to stand.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
Blackseafort	Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group
BTC	Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (pipeline)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization CSTO
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ERP	Economic Rehabilitation Programme (OSCE)
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
G8	Group of Eight (the seven leading Western industrial nations plus Russia)
GLONASS	Globalnaya Navigatsionnaya Sputnikovaya Sistema (Global Navigation Satellite System)
GPS	Global Positioning System (United States)
INOGATE	Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EU)
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TACIS	Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (EU)
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe–Caucasus–Asia
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOMIG	United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia
WTO	World Trade Organization

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